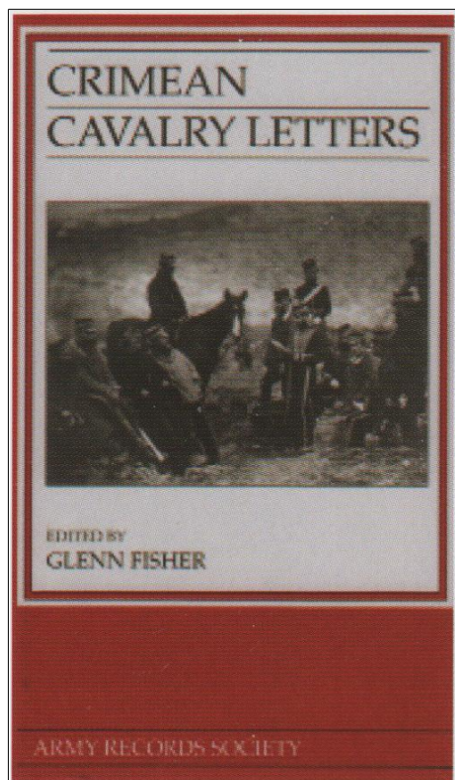


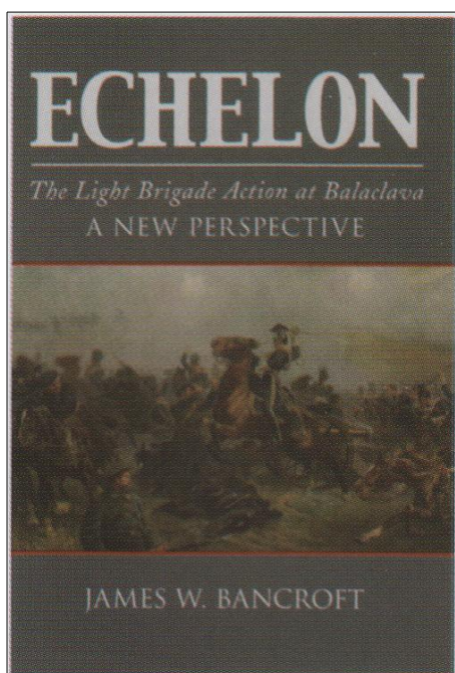
## 35 Book Reviews

Dr Douglas J Austin

35 [ TWC 29(4) p41 2012 ]

*Crimean Cavalry Letters* (edited by Glenn Fisher)*Publications of the Army Records Society Volume 31:**The History Press (Stroud) for ARS, 2011 ISBN 9780752465302*

In 336 pages, this handsome volume contains the collected Crimean War letters of four British Cavalry subalterns: Fiennes Wykeham Martin, 4th Light Dragoons #1-72; July/54-May/56; Edward Rowe Fisher-Rowe, 4th Dragoon Guards #73-166; February/54-December/55; Edward Phillips, 8th Hussars #167-194; May- December/54 and Thomas Hutton, 4th Light Dragoons #195-209; August/54-February/55. After an Introduction and Acknowledgements section, each officers letters are presented in date sequence, well supplemented with biographical information and useful footnotes. The book continues with Biographical Notes on high-ranking officers, a full Bibliography and an Index. It has been said that war consists of long hours of boredom punctuated with short minutes of terror. That is certainly borne out by these interesting and revealing letters. It's all here. The problems and (occasional) pleasures. The worries over baggage, the welfare of horses, promotion prospects. The grumbles over almost everything, from the physical (transport, accommodation, food, forage, leave of absence) to the emotional (the loss of friends, the presence of ungracious companions and staff officers). The confusion and daring of direct and vicious contact with the enemy. As officers, these young men were privileged compared to many. Each gives us his own take on the conditions and events around him. In combination, these letters give us a worthwhile overview of the hardships encountered and the achievements gained by the British cavalry in a campaign ultimately dominated by infantry and artillery operations on land. The author has created a valuable resource for students of this war. By drawing new information from long-forgotten archives and by adding informed comment, his work demonstrates that, with committed effort, still more awaits rediscovery. I am more than happy to recommend this book most strongly.

*Echelon: The Light Brigade at Balaclava:**A New Perspective* James W. BancroftPublished by Spellmount (The History Press),  
Stroud, 2011: 160pp, £16.99 ISBN 9780752462073

Already the author of at least three good books on this general topic, Mr Bancroft dispenses with long-winded expositions of the origins, grand strategy, and tactics of the Crimean War. Nor does he dwell on the personalities, conflicts, and blame-allocation among the senior officers involved. His new perspective is achieved in his combination of more than 100 eyewitness accounts and statements on 'The Charge'. After a brief Introduction, he proceeds to Chapter 1 'The Theatre of War' - providing us with short histories of the five Cavalry regiments involved and leading us to their camp outside Balaclava. Chapter 2 'Enemy Onslaught' - takes us from the daybreak alarm which began the battle to the Charge of the

Heavy Brigade (a still shamefully neglected triumph) and on to the moment when Captain Nolan brought Raglan's grossly ambiguous 4th Order to Lord Lucan. Without clarifying the objective, Lucan passed on the order to attack 'to the front' down the North Valley, which Lord Cardigan (after justified protest) duly initiated. Chapter 3 'Magnificent Madness' - describes the brigade's advance through vicious cross-fire to the Russian guns and well beyond, taking serious casualties on the way. Chapter 4 'Every Man for Himself!' - sets out the dismal tale of the inevitable retreat of the remnants, with further casualties to gunfire and to Cossack looters and murderers. Chapter 5 'And the Rest is History' takes the story through some of the experiences of captured Light Brigade men in Russia. Brief biographies of all of them are given, and lists of the DCM and Sardinian 'Al Valore' medal recipients in the Light Brigade are added. Chapter 6 'Sketches of the Light Brigade' - begins with the poems by Tennyson and Kipling and proceeds to some forty brief biographies of Light Brigade men, each accompanied by an illustration (some of them previously unpublished). A concise but useful Bibliography and Index complete the work. There are no footnotes in this text but it is greatly enhanced with a handsome collection of illustrations (twenty-three in colour). I can recommend this book to those who wish a clear and concise exposition of the experiences of brave and disciplined men under ultimate stress.